

Romans 6:1-11

January 9, 2022

There is a T-shirt for women. On the front are the words: "I'm with him," and an arrow pointing to one side. There is also a shirt for her husband to wear. It simply reads: "I'm him." When the couple wears these shirts out in public, he might want to be careful to always walk next to her on the side where the arrow is pointing.

Jesus does not need to wear a shirt that says, "I'm him." All He needs to do is to show the marks of the nails in His hands and His feet. These marks prove that Jesus is Him. Him who suffered, died, and rose again from the dead. Him who defeated the wicked foe. Him who will never die again, death no longer having dominion over Him.

Is there any "him" more important to be with than Jesus? On the Last Day when He comes in glory to judge the living and the dead, who would not want to cry out, "I'm with Him!" But sadly, not all will cry these words. Is it because they walked on the wrong side of the Lord here on earth? Was the arrow of their life pointing away from Jesus and not toward Him?

But who of us has walked with Jesus as we should? Has your arrow always pointed to Jesus proclaiming for all to see, "I'm with Him!" Mine hasn't. I fail miserably every day. And so do you.

This is reason to repent, yet not reason to despair. Through His apostle, Jesus gives us words of great comfort. He assures us that we are with Him. Not because of a shirt that we wear. Because of our baptism which we wear always. As I read His words in Romans 6, count the number of times He declares that you are with Him.

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him." (vss. 3-8)

Did you count? Six times. Six times we heard the words, "with Him...with Christ." Who? You. You are with Christ. You are with Him. Not because the arrow of your life points toward Him. Because by baptism you are with Him.

The Law cannot do this, but grace can. Keeping the Law of God to the best of our ability does not and cannot place us with Christ. We always fall short. The arrow of our life fails to point to Him. But by grace, the grace of God in Christ Jesus, you are with Him. Baptism is pure grace. It is not your feeble attempt to walk with Christ. It is His gracious work to place Himself with you.

And truly, this is a gracious work. For prior to our baptism, we were with sin. Sin, and its consequence death, had dominion over us. That was the shirt you wore at birth: "I'm with sin. I walk with sin, and it is my lord, for it has power over my life."

But no more. Jesus destroyed the power of sin and death by His death on the cross, His burial, and His resurrection. Because once someone dies, sin no longer has power over him. In your baptism you died with Christ, were buried with Him, and were raised to life with Him. You died to sin. And so, sin is no longer your lord. It has no power over you. You are no longer one who wears the words: "I'm with sin." Now in your baptism you wear Christ Jesus daily. You are with Him.

We buried Ollie yesterday in the hope of the resurrection. This hope accompanies everyone who is baptized into Christ Jesus. It appears that death claims us, one by one; that when our time comes, we are placed with death in our coffin. It appears this way to our eyes. But here is the truth. Not even death has power over your baptism. Not sin, not death, not the devil has power over your baptism. You are not with death when you die. You are and remain with Christ.

Nothing can break the bond forged in your baptism. You are in Christ and with Christ now and forever. Your sins cannot break this union. All your sins are forgiven. Everyone of them is forgiven by Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for you. Your death cannot break this union with Christ. And the devil has no power over your baptism. There is no union greater, in heaven or on earth, than the union of your baptism into Christ Jesus. You are with Him, my friend, now and forever.

And so, let the arrow of your life point to Jesus. Let everyone see, by how you walk, that you are with Him. But even when you fail, and your arrow points away from Him, do not think and believe that you are no longer with Christ. He who gave Himself for you, who lives within you, is with you always. Remember your baptism daily. It proclaims to you: "I am with Him, with Christ, my Lord and Savior." Amen.